

# HUDSON ROCKS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

August 2003

Approved by:



\_\_\_\_\_  
Dick Heath  
Regional Manager  
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: August 8/03



\_\_\_\_\_  
Nancy Wilkin  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Jan. 21/04

## HUDSON ROCKS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. Research and education activities may be carried out but only under permit.

### Primary Role

The **primary** role of Hudson Rocks Ecological Reserve is to protect seabird breeding habitat. This 50-hectare ecological reserve is located just off the coast of Nanaimo. It comprises four rocky islets totalling 2.5 hectares in size and 47 hectares of marine foreshore. Hudson Rocks and its foreshore is an important breeding and feeding ground for glaucous-winged gulls, pelagic cormorants, black oystercatchers, and pigeon guillemots. Common murres, ducks and many kinds of gulls feed around these rocks as well. The rocks historically served as a double-crested cormorant nesting site, but they were last observed nesting here in 1995. The site was originally proposed as an ecological reserve to protect a nationally significant breeding population of pelagic cormorants, but the population has since declined to three nests observed in 2000. Both species of cormorants have had a severe drop in population in the last decade and it is hoped that by preserving this habitat they will nest here again.

The ecological reserve also preserves intertidal and nearshore subtidal habitat typical of the Strait of Georgia *Marine* Ecoregion. These waters provide habitat for a wide variety of marine life such as finfish, salmon, herring spawn, harbour porpoises, and harbour seals (which use the rocks as haul-out sites).

### Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Lack of public awareness of ecological reserve; no signage	➤ Install appropriate signs in key locations informing the public about ecological reserve status, vulnerability of the birds and restrictions on landings.
Expansion of ecological reserve to include foreshore and the cormorant nesting sites on Five Fingers Island and Snake Island	➤ Continue to liaise with other government agencies, First Nations and stakeholders to secure foreshore and smaller islands to protect ecological values.
Potential impact from ferry wash	➤ Monitor for effect of ferry wash and work with BC Ferries to reduce impacts.
Commercial harvesting of marine species within the ecological reserve; sports fishing next to ecological reserve during nesting season.  Increasing recreational use and impacts to ecological reserve values.	➤ Work with the ecological reserve warden and Canadian Wildlife Service to monitor effect of sports fishing activity on birds. ➤ Work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada on fishery closures or other mitigation measures during bird breeding season. ➤ Work with the Canadian Hydrographic Service to provide information on the limited access to islands on marine charts. ➤ Close the ecological reserve to access except by permit.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Liaise with yacht clubs , marinas and other user groups to inform them of the ecological reserve and its restricted access status.</li></ul>
Declining cormorant populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Work with ecological reserve warden and Canadian Wildlife Service to monitor nesting sites and conduct research on habitat needs of cormorants.</li></ul>

### Conservation

- Representation  
- ecosection  Upland area too small to be representative.  
Hudson Rocks Ecological Reserve contributes minimally (0.63%) to the representation of the Strait of Georgia *Marine* Ecosection of which only 0.94% is protected provincially.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant  Upland area too small to be representative
- Special Features  Most of the ER is foreshore
- Rare/Endangered Values  Red-listed common murre. The colony of nesting pelagic cormorants (*a yellow-listed species of conservation concern*) has been severely declining since 1987 (when there were 142 nests) for unknown reasons, and the last observation in 2000 was of only 3 nests. Historic nesting site for the *blue-listed* double-crested cormorant (last observation of 15 nests was in 1995).
- Scientific/Research Opportunities  Seabird research opportunities

### Recreation

- Representation  
backcountry  Not Applicable  
destination  Not Applicable  
travel corridor  Not Applicable  
local recreation  Ecological reserves are not meant for outdoor recreation; however kayaking, boating and wildlife viewing occurs at this ecological reserve. Access to the ecological reserve will be closed, except by permit.
- Special Opportunities  None known at this time
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities  Offsite education/interpretation potential

### Cultural Heritage

- Representation  Values unknown
- Special Feature  Hudson Rocks' area has significance to Snuneymuxw First Nations

### Other Management Considerations

- |                                      |                                     |   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Other Designations                   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Interest to designate this as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA program is an international program that identifies and supports the protection of lands having special bird habitats.      |
| Relationship to other PAs            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Part of a system of protected areas focused on bird breeding areas in coastal BC. One of 152 ecological reserves in the province.   |
| Co-operative Management Arrangements | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Not Applicable  |
| Partnerships                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Ecological Reserve warden   |
| Vulnerability                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Disturbance of seabirds during nesting season, habitat destruction by recreational users, foreshore erosion by ferry wash, harvesting of marine species (prawns) within the ecological reserve. |
| Relationship to other Strategies     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Marine Protected Areas Strategy   |

**Area:** 49.5 hectares (47 ha foreshore, 2.5 ha upland)

**Date of establishment:** April 30, 1996